

## Moving Recovery Forward Through Employment Conference

By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director



On Wednesday, April 6, 2016, The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) and the Los Angeles County Mental Health Commission presented “Moving Recovery Forward through Employment” at the California Endowment. The conference was standing room only, with over 300 clinicians, providers and consumers in attendance. Formerly known as “Connections for Life,” the conference stressed the importance of work in mental health recovery.

Mark Parra, M.Ed., CHEERD, served as Master of Ceremonies, introducing featured speakers Robin Kay, Ph.D., LACDMH Acting Director, John Brekke, Ph.D., USC School of Social Work and Larry Robbin of Robbin & Associates.

Dr. Kay welcomed the crowd and quoted Sigmund Freud, who said, “The cornerstone of humanness is love and work.” She added that it’s important to envision success first before



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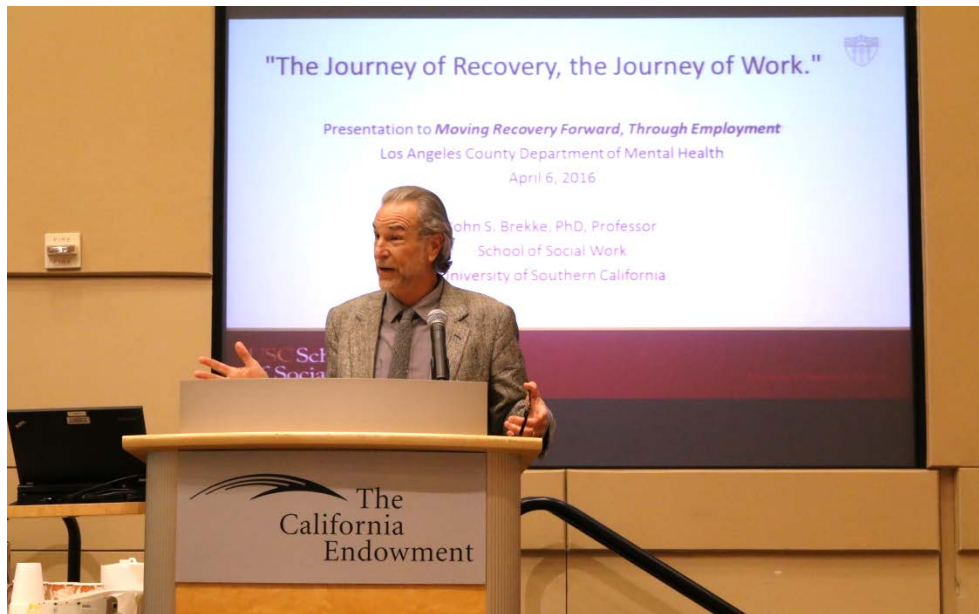
one can realize individual goals. Dr. Kay recognized Lou Mallory, Peer Health Navigation Specialist with a certificate and journal. Lou encouraged all to start small in their work goals. "Volunteer to do something you love at first. The rest will follow."

Dr. Kay also recognized Jomar Giner, Employment Facilitator, with a certificate and journal. Jomar offered the following affirmation: "Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can."



From left to right: Jomar Giner, Robin Kay, and Lou Mallory

Mr. Parra introduced keynote speaker John Brekke, whose work focuses on the improvement of community-based services for individuals diagnosed with mental illness. He has studied how to facilitate the implementation of evidence-based practices in community-based services for individuals with schizophrenia, and has developed, manualized, and tested the effectiveness of a community-based peer health navigator intervention linking mental health and health services for the seriously mentally ill.



*John Brekke*

After a break to visit resource tables located outside the Yosemite room, Mr. Parra introduced Larry Robbin, who reminded the audience that many powerful and successful people had mental illnesses, including President Abraham Lincoln. With regard to employment, Robbin said, "Sometimes luck comes into play. I define 'luck' as 'preparedness meeting opportunity'."



*Larry Robbin*

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Community resource tables were represented by: California Department of Rehabilitation, Central American Resource Center, Chrysalis, Goodwill Southern California, Hollywood WorkSource Center, Pacific Clinics TAY Peer Training Program, Social Security Administration, Work Incentives Planning & Assistance, Managed Care Solutions & Verdugo Job Center, Project Return Peer Support Network, and Westside Center for Independent Living.